

✓ Redistricting not going to be smooth sailing

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BATON ROUGE — While it appeared Louisiana's congressional delegation had reached an amicable redistricting compromise to propose to the Legislature to draw new election lines, we find apparently all seven members don't necessarily agree.

After all, with Louisiana's census numbers, one of them has to go.

It seems the new plan, drawn up in a Chinese restaurant, wasn't swallowed by everyone. At least one congressman has something else on his plate.

Newly elected 3rd District Congressman Jeff Landry of New Iberia has the most to lose. He wants a district that stretches across the Gulf Coast, but he appears to be the only one who has that on his menu.

Landry would compete in his plan with 7th District Congressman Charles Boustany of Lafayette, who has been in office since 2005 and waltzed back in this term unopposed.

While most of the incumbents were toasting their decision, state Rep. Rick Gallot of Ruston dropped an egg roll in the punchbowl.

Gallot, the chairman of the House committee that has at least 50 percent of the say in how the districts are drawn, said while it's fine for the congressmen to suggest something, it's the state House and Senate that draws the line.

And now we hear Boustany was trying to get a jump on the next election, planning meetings in what's now Landry's district.

Let's say Landry is not pleased and leave it at that.

LEGISLATIVE REMAPPING

While the early attention has been on congressional districts because statewide numbers came out first, lawmakers now have numbers they will use to draw up their own new election districts.

The numbers show 66 of the 105 House districts have to be adjusted. But when you adjust one, the neighboring district also is affected, so even the ones that currently have the perfect number of residents could have to be altered. The rearranging could affect every district and some incumbents will have new faces in their districts, one of which could be the next-door legislator.

The numbers show some existing districts with far above the appropriate number of residents and some far below. That definitely could force incumbents to compete.

Hurricanes Katrina and Rita are the primary cause of shifts in southern parishes and possibly a factor in some northern parishes, including Bossier Parish's growth, since a large number of evacuees headed north. Haynesville Shale production also probably contributed to the surge in Bossier.

The loss of population in rural parishes is a continuing trend tracked by previous census counts.



Mike Hasten

Gannett Capital Bureau
mhasten@gannett.com